

i was safe, i was brave, until the sky collapsed on me **by eternalgoldfish**

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Summary:

Steve pushes himself up to his feet and dusts off his ass, even if it's completely useless. His clothes are soaked through. His hair is thick with ice. He tries to curl his fingers up into his jacket as far as he can as he says, "Shut up and follow me. I think I see something."

"If it's snow, or trees, or snow, or like, that one branch that hit me in the face a few minutes ago, I'm already seeing what you're seeing."

There's no real answer to that question that won't set Billy off again, so Steve stays tight lipped. They knew a storm was coming when they went walking into the woods. Billy has a good excuse for getting lost in the unknown, for underestimating a Hawkins winter, but Steve doesn't. He's got Hawkins in his blood, more than most, with the amount of dirt dug into his wounds between playing baseball with scraped knuckles and loading the bases with Demodogs. He's shed blood in this town and let it lick his wounds. He knows better.

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Author's Note:

- For [hoppnhorn](#), [look_turtles](#).

hoppnhorn asked me for a first kiss and look_turtles requested some cold feet, so I took both literally and figuratively.

The song is "Glasshouse" by Hands Like Houses.

Harsh and wild wind blasts through the underbrush, carrying snow so bitter and heavy that it falls between the trees in violent bursts, shoots into Steve's watering eyes until he can't see and his hands are numb. He can hardly hear the snow crunching ahead of him anymore, but he knows Billy is still there, is pretty sure he could reach out and touch him. If he screamed, Billy would know he'd made a sound.

So Steve screams, dragon's breath wafting through the ice like steam off a bath in the dark evening. Not that Steve could see his breath he wanted too, between the weather, the dense trees and the coy moon. He merely feels the warmth on his face a second and imagines what the sweaty heat of living could be like, before the dampness crystalizes on his jacket collar from how he's holding it against his neck. For that moment, he could be in Peru, southern Italy, California.

"Jesus fucking Christ," Billy shouts. Steve stumbles into him hard, smashing the toe of his boot into a rock or tree root. He freezes against Billy's back, their bodies moving as one a moment before Billy flinches hard, using his elbows to throw Steve back into the snow with a heavy *thwump*.

Steve can't really see, but he can tell when Billy turns on him, can just barely make out Billy's toothy, snotty expression as his frozen hands grapple for the front of Steve's jacket.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing?" Billy hisses, shaking

Steve roughly. His curls block the worst of the snow from reaching Steve's eyes and for a moment, Steve thinks he can make out a shape twisting between the trees, a door he's only seen once. It's probably not even what he thinks it is, but Billy is growing impatient as he runs his tongue over his lips and fails to catch Steve's gaze.

"We are going to die in this godforsaken wasteland," Billy says, "and it's entirely your fucking fault. So you want to fuck around? Okay. But I'm leaving you here."

"My fault?" Steve asks, their eyes finally clicking together as he bares his teeth. Billy always stokes something hot and angry in Steve's insides, something he never noticed how much he liked. "You following me in here was my fault?"

"You told me to come get you."

"I told you to go fuck yourself."

"Like that's not the same thing," Billy sneers and shoves Steve back on the ground.

Steve kicks out the back of Billy's knees as he turns, making him stumble and curse. All their loud sounds seem quiet in the night. They can't compete with the wind, but god, has Billy been trying.

"We're starting this now?" Billy shouts.

Steve pushes himself up to his feet and dusts off his ass, even if it's completely useless. His clothes are soaked through. His hair is thick with ice. He tries to curl his fingers up into his jacket as far as he can as he says, "Shut up and follow me. I think I see something."

"If it's snow, or trees, or snow, or like, that one branch that hit me in the face a few minutes ago, I'm already seeing what you're seeing."

There's no real answer to that question that won't set Billy off again, so Steve stays tight lipped. They knew a storm was coming when they went walking into the woods. Billy has a good excuse for getting lost in the unknown, for underestimating a Hawkins winter, but Steve doesn't. He's got Hawkins in his blood, more than most, with the amount of dirt dug into his wounds between playing baseball with

scraped knuckles and loading the bases with Demodogs. He's shed blood in this town and let it lick his wounds. He knows better.

He stumbles, blind-again, towards the blanket he swore he saw shifting in the wind. It's a miracle, an actual miracle, when his hands meet the tatty fabric. The door to Castle Byers is snow-stiff and haggard. Steve laughs as he drops to his knees and shuffles inside. It's still cold inside the fort, but the wind is mostly kept out by the tightly bundled sticks. The only blowing snow in is from the door.

After Will went missing the first time, Jonathan had helped him reinforce the fort, just in case. Steve doesn't want to think about the Demogorgon and its dripping maw, imagines Will doesn't like to, either, but it brings Will peace of mind to know there is one refuge in the upside-down. It gives Steve a similar calm in this storm, and he knows it's not the same, could never be the same as what Will has experienced, but inside, with the wind howling a little less and Billy cursing as he tumbles through the doorway, Steve feels safer in the dark.

"What the fuck is this?" Billy asks.

"Castle Byers."

Billy shuffles forwards on his hands and knees until he bumps into Steve's shins, where Steve has his knees pulled up to his chest. "Which is what, a shitty play-fort? Aren't they a bit old?"

"Look, man, I don't know," Steve says. "I know them, but I don't *know* them."

"You don't know your friends?"

"It's complicated."

Steve fumbles with his lighter as Billy laughs, thumbs aching and frozen as he presses on the wheel. "Everything is complicated in Hawkins," Billy says. "Fucking mysteries all over the place."

"God, I could use a smoke," Steve mutters, but that's not why he's got metal gripped between his hands like a prayer. Every useless *schlick* of the wheel makes him feel younger, colder. He's been smoking

since he was thirteen and it's not the first time he's been freezing, licking his lips, looking for a light, but his heart has never beat in time with the wheel before. He's never begged for flame.

It's a strange fear he feels as his knees brush Billy. It's a feeling that belongs to someone else, someone who hasn't tasted Hawkins' blood. The spark catches for an instant and shocks the room with light. Billy's eyes are damp marbles, his eyebrows pinch and his lips part downward in half whispers. Steve's thumb shakes and slips again.

Before Steve can start on the lighter, Billy grabs his wrist, thumb digging into the soft palm of his hand. His breath is hot on Steve's left ear as he says, "Give it a fucking rest."

Steve wants to know if Billy knows they're so close, must from the way their eyes had met in the moment of light. He's learning Billy's breathing, how the soft sounds fit beside the wind rattling their shelter. He feels a little like a cloistered beaver, but that's fucking ridiculous.

One of Billy's legs pushes under Steve's bent knees, the other going around the back of his waist. "We should stay close," he says. "That's what they tell you to do in shit like this, right? Body heat or whatever."

"I think that needs skin to skin," Steve says, struck dumb and murmuring. It sounds like flirtation. It sounds breathless.

"Not a fucking chance. I'm not dying for you, naked in some woods."

"You wouldn't die for me?"

"Fuck, no."

Steve licks his lips, says, "But you wanted to kiss me."

Billy's always run like a furnace, one of those old wood ones that huffs white ashes out the grate and crackles orange and angry. His nose is cold against Steve's cheekbone but his cheek is hot as he slips to hold Steve sideways, Steve's legs held tight to his hip but his arms around Steve's waist. "Yeah, and you ran into the fucking woods."

“I told you to leave me alone.”

“I had to beat the shit out of your first. Keep you quiet.”

“That’s not what this is.”

“No,” Billy takes a deep breath. “Walking around out there, I remembered what a fucking awful liar you are.”

Steve isn’t sure how to take that, so he takes it for what he thinks it’s worth, holds it on his tongue as he leans in to Billy’s chest and rests his head on his shoulder. The angle is awkward, scrunches his neck a bit, and the frosty soft leather of Billy’s jacket bites his skin. “I’m not a liar,” Steve says softly.

“Then what are you?” Billy asks, shifting until his breath ghosts Steve’s lips. Steve’s wondered what toothpaste Billy uses to keep his teeth so white, has thought absently about what flavour of mint it must be. Does Billy brush three times a day, or is he lazy like most people? Does he slip sips of Jack Daniel’s between last period and basketball practice? Would Billy taste like whiskey and spice, like the men of Steve’s mother’s romance novels?

Steve isn’t stupid. He’s kissed a lot of girls. He knows what to do with his lips, tongue, teeth, knows that mouths usually taste like mouths, but he’s spent so much time thinking about Billy’s that it’s become its own thing, messy and gorgeous in Steve’s mind. That Billy wants him to taste reality is stalling.

“Done with your shit.”

“Yeah?”

Steve’s breath stutters. “Yeah.”

In the supermarket parking lot, surrounded by dim streetlights and lightly falling snow, Steve had leaned against his car and smirked, all bravado and hands in his pockets as Billy had sauntered across the concrete. Steve sees his confidence in a new light, wonders when the fuck he’d gotten shaky. Maybe it’s the cold or the absent moon. Maybe it’s the forest with all its teeth. Or maybe it’s Billy, a creature unlike any other he’s wanted. Maybe it’s the uncertainty of the

universe with his lust behind locked doors, the strangeness of Billy's stubble against his nose, his unending litany of excuses for feelings he doesn't understand.

Sometimes fear is just fear, rests heavy in the hollow of Steve's stomach. Not everything needs to be pulled apart and sorted, although Steve feels a little bit like he's coming apart, like Billy's arms are the ropes holding Castle Byers together. Is Steve the shelter or the storm?

"You're an asshole." Billy's voice betrays him, cracks in the middle.

"I've been told that before."

"Fuck you."

It's suddenly so irrational, like, impossibly hilarious, that Steve can't help the laugh that coughs out of him. He's such a fucking mess. Billy's skin is warming in the cold, lost in the dark. Steve fucks up the first kiss, presses it somewhere half on Billy's nose, the second on his upper lip. Billy shoves him hard, says, "What the fuck do you think you're doing, Harrington?"

Steve laughs into the sheets and pillows as he realizes they've been scrunched together on the makeshift bed pressed into the back wall, laughs until Billy is clumsily rolling Steve on his back and covering his body with his own. "You think this is funny?"

Steve's vocal chords feel stiff with frost. "Maybe you should just beat me up," Steve says. It's steady, smooth. The shiver in his heart feels like flirting.

"Maybe you should shut the fuck up," Billy says, but Steve's already fumbling for the zipper on Billy's jacket, uses it to pull Billy closer.

Billy's lips are full but chapped to hell, destroyed in a way that only licking them over and over in the winter air could accomplish. Steve's aren't a lot better as he cranes up and kisses his nose, then his mouth, with the wind outside or maybe blood rushing in his ears. Billy kisses like he fights, eager and with gasping breaths, knocking their teeth together like he can't control his own gravity as he presses

Steve into the pillows with his hands above Steve's head.

With one hand, Steve gets a fistful of Billy's curls tangled around his fingers, while his other hand keeps pulling on that zipper until Billy lifts enough to get his jacket open, then the buttons on his shirt. Steve's breath hitches as he fumbles with his own jacket. It's hard to kiss Billy and do other things. His mouth is all-consuming.

Need is a little light-headed, a little stupid, and Steve knows that as he wiggles his polo shirt up until it's tucked into his armpits. He still wants Billy's firm abdomen pressing against his own, their skin forming a pocket of warmth between their hearts.

"Fucking weirdo," Billy murmurs, so Steve flips them, kisses him quiet.

Billy slips his hands into Steve's open jacket and digs his fingers between his ribs like fishhooks. The pain spills fire into Steve's veins that burns down to his groin, pulls him to Billy like he's stuck in his net, like he's out of water. "For body heat," Steve gasps. He grinds down and Billy moans.

The thing is, Billy is probably gorgeous, probably shameless. His mouth just tastes like a mouth but his hands are rough and warm. He probably cries out when he fucks. Steve wants to see that in the light.

"We should-" he says.

Billy says, "Yeah." Then he tips Steve on his side, lets their legs tangle.

"I hate you."

"Yeah."

Steve kisses Billy soft and slow, knows this is all more mess than he's willing to handle in the morning light, but Billy is warm, steadfast, holds him like fishhooks sucked into an undertow, and in this glasshouse Steve wants more than he can take. He can't explain the fear, but he wants.

Billy will be mean in the morning. Steve won't be shy. They'll sneer,

walk to their cars, and find moments to kiss in the moonlight. Maybe. Steve hopes.

Author's Note:

This took me an actual decade to write, for reasons I don't wholly understand.

Thank you so much, uncaringerinn, for helping me work out some of the weirdness in this and being a huge help.

And thank you everyone else for reading. As always, I'd love to hear what you think.

I hope your week is filled with joy and happiness.